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SOME JEWISH ASSOCIATES OF JOHN BROWN

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NEW YORK CITY



Reprinted from
THE MAGAZINE OF HISTORY
WITH NOTES AND QUERIES
September, 1908

Gift
Author
(Person)

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SOME JEWISH ASSOCIATES OF JOHN BROWN.

PERHAPS no period in the history of our country has been the subject of opinions more widely divergent, than the period immediately preceding the Civil War, and more particularly the story of the struggle for Kansas (1854-7). Nor is there a character in the whole range of American history concerning whom more widely opposite views have prevailed than that of John Brown of Osawatimie. On the one hand a group of writers have characterized him and his men as marauders,¹ on the other hand a no less distinguished group, including Emerson, Thoreau, Hinman and Sanborn, have accorded them a foremost place in American patriotism, calling them the Deliverers of Kansas and Martyrs to the cause of freedom.²

No less extreme are the views concerning the effect of John Brown's career. One group of historians declared that it had practically no effect whatever,³ another, numbering many famous names, have called John Brown and his little band "the first recruits to inaugurate the great struggle which cost nearly a million of lives and billions of money"⁴ and the writer in Appleton's Cyclopaedia goes so far even, as to state "that slavery would have triumphed over all legal and legislative skill had not the sword been thrown into the balance even in a small way; that the largest affairs in which Brown took part, Black Jack and Osawatimie for instance, seem trifling amid the vast encounters of the Civil War, but with these petty skirmishes nevertheless began that great conflict."⁵

Amid such extremes it is most difficult to reach a just estimate and I have therefore chosen as a fair guide in the narrative, wherever possible.

¹ John W. Burgess, *The Middle Period in American History Series*. (N. Y., 1897.) 440-1.

² See also Dr. Leverett W. Spring, *John Brown and the Destruction of Slavery*. Mass. Hist. Soc. Publ., 2d Series, vol. xiv., p. 2. Also A. R. Keim, *John Brown in Richardson County*. Neb. State Hist. Soc., vol. ii., p. 109, quoting also James Redpath. See also estimates of Ingalls, Theodore Parker, Alcott and others given in Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown*. (Boston, 1885.)

³ J. W. Burgess, *The Middle Period*. N. Y., 1897.

James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States*. (N. Y., 1899,) vol. ii, p. 165.

⁴ H. E. Palmer in vol. vi., *Kan. S. Hist. Soc.* 317.

⁵ Appleton's *Cyc. of Amer. Biog.* i., p. 406.

the excellent work of James Ford Rhodes, whose history of the period is rapidly becoming recognized as a standard.⁶

One thing, however, seems to be conceded even by the most partisan writers, namely that Brown was actuated by a sincere desire to abolish slavery, that his motives were honest and pure, even though the methods he employed are the subject of violent controversy.

It is also noteworthy that despite the mass of literature that has grown up around Brown, his men and the troubles in Kansas, there were never at any time associated with him more than about a score of followers. It is therefore most interesting to find that three of this small group were Jewish pioneers.

In order to understand the career of John Brown and his men, it is absolutely essential to get some idea of the leader himself, and of the condition of things that surrounded him in Kansas.

Brown was a descendant of one of the Puritans who came over in the *Mayflower*; for two generations, at least, the family had been New England Abolitionists, and the man's whole soul was sworn in enmity to the institution of slavery. Whether sanely or not, he honestly considered himself the instrument of God to strike a blow against the hideous institution, and as Appleton's *Cyclopedia* informs us, on one occasion while he was still living in the East, "he solemnly called his older sons together and pledged them kneeling in prayer to give their lives to anti-slavery work."⁷ In the words of Mr. Rhodes "He was ascetic in habits, inflexible in temper, upright in intention. He was what people called a visionary man."⁸ For many years he had devoted his energies and limited means to what he believed to be his divine mission. Some of his sons had emigrated to Kansas in 1855, and this ultimately induced him to follow, with the avowed purpose of preventing slavery from becoming permanently established in the new territory.⁹

Let us now turn to the conditions existing in Kansas at the time. It will at once become clear that a mind so inflamed against slavery was of

⁶ James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850*. (N. Y., 1899.)

⁷ Appleton's *Cyc. of Amer. Biog.* i., 405.

⁸ Rhodes' *History of the United States*, vol. ii., p. 161.

⁹ Appleton's *Cyc. of Amer. Biog.*, i., 405, &c. Also Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown*. (Bost., 1885.)

necessity forced to play a prominent part in the extraordinary conditions that prevailed.

By the terms of the Missouri Compromise in 1820, Missouri was to be admitted as a slave state, but all the country north of 36° 30' north latitude was to be free soil. As years went on however, several territories like California had been admitted as free states, the Abolition movement was spreading rapidly through New England and elsewhere, and it soon became evident to the South, not only that the institution of slavery was in danger, but that with the advent of new free states the influence of the slaveholding states and of the entire South in Congress would be considerably diminished. It therefore became of supreme importance to prevent if possible, the admission of any more free states into the Union.

Kansas and Nebraska were a portion of the Louisiana Purchase—both were being rapidly settled by immigration from the North and the latter was destined beyond doubt to be a free state. By the terms of the Missouri Compromise, Kansas was likewise free soil. Alarmed by the prospect of two additional free states in Congress, the southern leaders, Jefferson Davis, Douglas and others brought about legislation known as the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which nullified the Missouri Compromise and provided that the people of the Territories mentioned should determine for themselves whether they would be slave or free.

Kansas had been Indian land, and as soon as it was thrown open to white settlement in 1854 the policy of the South became manifest. She began pouring into Kansas armed bands of ruffians, for the purpose of keeping out northern immigration or at any rate for preventing anti-slavery settlers from taking an active part in the affairs of the Territory.¹⁰

Both North and South realized the importance of the issue in Kansas, which was summed up by a contemporary writer and has been quoted by most of the historians of the period: "If the South secures Kansas, she will extend slavery into the territory south of the 40th parallel of north latitude, to the Rio Grande, and this of course will secure for her pent up institution of slavery an ample outlet, and restore her power in Congress. If the North secure Kansas, the power of the South in Congress will be gradually diminished and the slave property

¹⁰ Appleton's *Cyc. of Amer. Biog.*, 404 &c. Also Connelley's *John Brown*, pp. 37 &c.

will become valueless. All depends on the action of the present moment."¹¹

It soon developed, however, that Kansas, though a beautiful and fertile country, did not attract settlers from the South. One reason given for this is that the Southern planter found it more difficult to dispose of his property for purposes of emigration. His institutions, and particularly his slave property, had more or less fixed him to the soil. On the other hand immigration from the North was active from the start. Without the handicap of the southern men, the farmers from Iowa, Illinois and Indiana came to seek their fortune in the new western lands irrespective of the Slavery issue. These were reinforced by immigration from New England, much of which was the result of assistance given by the Emigrant Aid Society of Massachusetts, which encouraged free state men to go to Kansas; in addition to which was the tide of immigration through Northern ports by sturdy new-comers from European countries, to whom the institution of slavery was entirely foreign. Whatever may be said of the assistance given these settlers, they certainly were *bonâ fide* settlers, and the pro-slavery element in Kansas was soon decidedly in the minority. Notwithstanding this the slave power was determined to make Kansas a slave state at all hazards.¹²

The first election for a Territorial Legislature had been set for March 30, 1855, and it was naturally apprehended that it would be filled with anti-slavery men.

What followed is best given in the words of Rhodes' history: "This election day was also taken note of in Missouri, and before it came, an unkempt, sun-dried, blatant, picturesque mob of 5000 Missourians, with guns upon their shoulders, revolvers stuffing their belts, Bowie knives protruding from their boot-tops and generous rations of whiskey in their wagons, had marched into Kansas to assist in the election of the legislature. The invaders were distributed with military precision and were sent into every district but one. Where the election judges were not pro-slavery men, the mob awed them into submission or drove them away by threats. 6307 votes were counted, of which more than three-quarters were cast by the Missourians."¹³

¹¹ Warren Wilkes in the *Charleston Mercury*, quoted in *Appleton's Cyc.*, i., 404.

¹² Franklin B. Sanborn, *Life and Letters of John Brown* (Boston, 1885), pp. 161-6, 167-73, where many authorities are collected.

¹³ James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States* (N. Y., 1899), ii., p. 81. See also Howard, *Report*, p. 30. Also Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown*, p. 190, quoting Horace Greeley.

Dr. Robinson, subsequently Governor of Kansas, wrote to Amos Lawrence: "The election is awful and will, no doubt, be set aside."¹⁴

As it was rumored that the Territorial Governor was indignant and might order a new election, he was openly told that he could have fifteen minutes to decide whether he would give certificates to those who had the most votes, or be shot.¹⁵ Needless to say, the majority of the pro-slavery men were seated.

The indignation of the free states at this perversion of popular government was unbounded, the settlers wrote home to their friends in New England, and to quote Rhodes, "Evidence like this from well known people was sufficient of itself to mould the sentiment of all rural New England. There could be no dispute about the facts," and even the Territorial governor (Reeder) declared "that the territory of Kansas in her late election was invaded by a regular organized army, armed to the teeth, who took possession of the ballot boxes and made a legislature to suit the purpose of the pro-slavery party."¹⁶ Though Reeder was decidedly in favor of the South, he admitted "that the accounts of fierce outrages and wild violences perpetrated, at the election, published in the Northern papers were in no wise exaggerated,"¹⁷ and Edward Everett's comment was: "It has lately been maintained by the sharp logic of the revolver and the Bowie knife that the people of Missouri are the people of Kansas."¹⁸

But now came the more serious part of the struggle. This fraudulent Territorial legislature drew up a pro-Slavery Code of Laws, which Rhodes says "was utterly out of tune with Republican government in the 19th century."¹⁹ Any free person, who by speaking, writing, or printing, should advise slaves to rebel, should suffer death;—to declare orally or in writing that slavery did not legally exist in the territory, incurred imprisonment of not less than two years.—All officers, attorneys at law and voters, if challenged, must take an oath to support the Fugitive Slave Law.²⁰

¹⁴ Rhodes. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82. Also Sanborn, p. 173. Also Howard *Report*, p. 936.

¹⁶ Rhodes, *History of the United States*, ii., pp. 82-3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83. Also *N. Y. Times*, May 1, 1855.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84. See Everett's *Orations*, iii., 347.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Despite all this, it must be remembered that the majority of settlers were against slavery and that slavery did not exist in fact, for by the census of 1855 there were but 192 slaves out of a total population of 8600.

"The men of the North," says Rhodes, "were actual settlers, and the same kind of people that we have seen in our own day leave their homes and emigrate to Southern California and Dakota. Those who went into Kansas from Missouri were, on account of their appearance and actions, called 'Border Ruffians.'"²¹

A Congressional Committee, of which John Sherman was a member, subsequently investigated conditions and its report showed that what has been said was no exaggeration. It reported that the territorial elections were carried by fraud, that the Territorial Legislature was an illegally constituted body and that its enactments were null and void.²² But this committee did not make its report until July, 1856, and in the meantime the free settlers quite naturally determined to ignore the laws referred to. The result of this resistance was, that the free State town of Lawrence was repeatedly attacked, while the Administration, with Jefferson Davis as Secretary of War, did little to interfere.²³

In order to sustain the slavery victory and enforce obedience to the bogus laws, the South appropriated money to assist in the equipment of military companies to overawe the settlers. Thus Colonel Buford of Alabama raised 280 men, "of whom the majority," according to the leading writers, "were ignorant and brutal and made fit companions for the Missouri Border Ruffians."²⁴

Space will not permit me to give any adequate idea of the outrages perpetrated by the armed southern bands and Border Ruffians on all who were, or were supposed to be anti-slavery; murder of free state men became common, while the invaders practically subsisted by plundering free state settlers. It soon became necessary to arm the latter, and Henry Ward Beecher declared "that the Sharps Rifle was a greater moral agency than the Bible."²⁵

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²² Rhodes, *History of the United States*, ii., p. 197. See also Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown*, pp. 173-8.

²³ *Ibid.* Also Rhodes *History*, ii., pp. 83, &c., 105, &c. See also William Elsey Connelley's *John Brown*, in *Twentieth Century Classics* (Topeka, 1900).

²⁴ Rhodes, *History of the United States*, ii., p. 151. Connelley's *John Brown*, pp. 83 and 85.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82. See also pp. 98, 100. Also Rhodes' *History*, ii., p. 153.

In answer to appeals for aid, the President advised the complainants to resort to the courts. How little aid these afforded, however, is most strikingly illustrated by quoting the sage of Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote: "Of Kansas the President says, 'let the complainants go to the courts,' though he knows that when the poor, plundered farmer goes to the court, he finds the ringleader who has robbed him, dismounting from his own horse, and unbuckling his knife, to sit as his judge."²⁶

It was amid scenes like these, that John Brown came to Kansas in October, 1855, and settled at Osawatomie, where his sons had preceded him. Were anything needed to inflame his hatred of slavery, he found it in the conditions existing there. Assisted by his sons, his name soon became known throughout the territory as a leader to whom the unprotected free state settlers looked.

In the vicinity of Osawatomie were Buford's military horde, a mass of Border Ruffians and several brutal pro-slavery settlers, most prominent of whom were the Doyles, Wilkinson and the Sherman brothers.²⁷ Near here, too, was a settlement of northern men and free state Germans, known as "Dutch Settlement," which was particularly obnoxious to the slavery element.²⁸

Prominent among these free state men were three Jews, Theodore Wiener, a Pole, Jacob Benjamin, a Bohemian, and August Bondi, a native of Vienna.²⁹ Wiener was about 37 years of age, while the other two were considerably younger.

Bondi was eminently fitted to become an associate of John Brown, and I may be pardoned if I give a short sketch of his career.³⁰

His father, Herz Emanuel Bondi, was a native of Prague but had resided for many years in Vienna, where August was born in 1833. The boy received an academic and scientific education, and with that love of freedom that characterized his subsequent career he enlisted in the

²⁶ Emerson's *Miscellanies*, pp. 244-6. See also Sanborn's *Life and Letters*, &c., p. 500.

²⁷ Connelley's *John Brown*, pp. 103, 104. Sanborn, pp. 272 &c., 253, 254.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142. Also Sanborn, 254.

²⁹ Connelley, 142. See also Sanborn, 254. See also Mr. Bondi's *Sketches* hereinafter referred to. The writer has also corresponded with Mr. Bondi and has in his possession interesting letters on the entire subject, written in answer to inquiries.

³⁰ This sketch appeared in 8 *Kansas Hist. Soc. Coll.*, p. 275. See also article in *Salina Herald*, Jan. and Feb., 1884.

students' revolutionary movement just preceding 1848. As a youth of fifteen he became a member of the Vienna Academic Legion, a body 9000 strong, consisting of students between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. This body organized the revolution in the German Austrian States, assisting Kossuth. Young Bondi became a member of Captain Zach's Company, and was among the few survivors at the semi-centennial Academic Reunion in 1898.

But the youth's revolutionary career was cut short, for in September, 1848, his parents emigrated to the United States, settling in St. Louis. On coming of age, he became actively identified with the Benton or Free State Democratic Party, and in March, 1855, he started for Kansas. In May he settled on the Mosquito Branch of the Pottawatomie Creek, in Franklin County.³¹

Both Wiener and Benjamin had resided in St. Louis, and Benjamin had settled in Kansas about the same time with Bondi, establishing a trading post.³² In September, 1855, Wiener agreed with Benjamin to go to Kansas to open a store, and Sanborn and other writers inform us that he invested \$7000 in goods which he took thither.³³

Before Wiener's arrival, however, both Bondi and Benjamin had an experience which added to the hardships of pioneer life. One of the Shermans, already referred to, had informed the former "that he had heard that he and Benjamin were free soilers, and therefore would advise them to clear out, or they would meet a dreadful fate."³⁴ Similar statements were made by another slavery worthy,³⁵ and Bondi and Benjamin thereupon took counsel what to do. Benjamin stated that he had heard of a small settlement of Ohio men about five miles to the northeast, and both agreed that these ought to be seen. Next morning Benjamin went there and about noon returned with Frederick Brown, who brought word from his three brothers that they would always be ready to assist Bondi and his friend.³⁶

³¹ *Ibid.* Also *With John Brown in Kansas*, written by August Bondi at the request of Major Henry Inman and published in the *Salina Herald*, in Jan. and Feb., 1884. See also article in *The Morning Oregonian* (Portland), Sept. 3, 1903.

³² *Ibid.* See also Sanborn, 230, 254, 272. Connelley, 142, and Hinman.

³³ *Ibid.* See also Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown*, p. 272, 230, 254. Additional detail is contained in letters in possession of the present writer, and in the sketches of Mr. Bondi in *Kan. Hist. Soc. Collections*.

³⁴ Connelley's *John Brown*, p. 104. Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown*, p. 254.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ See sketch in 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, p. 275, etc. Also Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown*, p. 254.

These were the sons of John Brown, and the incident happened some time before their father came to Kansas. John Jr. had, however, organized a military company, which both Benjamin and Bondi joined.³⁷

John Brown arrived in October, 1855; ³⁸ a few days before, the free state men held an election of their own for a Territorial Convention. At this time Bondi was ill with fever, but anxious to participate, two German neighbors placed him in a cart and conveyed him to the voting place, where he met old John Brown for the first time.³⁹

We now approach the climax of lawlessness in Kansas. The free state town of Lawrence had been repeatedly attacked by the slavery forces, and an excuse was wanted for another assault. This the Border Ruffians soon found, acting ostensibly as a marshal's posse. To quote again from Rhodes' History. "It was a swearing, whiskey-drinking, ruffianly horde, seven hundred and fifty in number. The irony of fate had made them the upholders of the law, while the industrious, frugal community of Lawrence were the law-breakers." The business of the United States official was soon completed,—but the so-called posse entered and destroyed the offices of obnoxious newspapers, the place was plundered, and they finally applied the torch, and sacked the town."⁴⁰ The news spread like wildfire, arousing the entire North, while in the territory itself most of the free state men were at first dismayed. This was the occasion that first brought John Brown into national prominence.

At the news of the proposed attack on Lawrence, a party of free state men under Brown, and several companies under other commanders decided to go to the relief of the town. Sanborn's narrative informs us that Wiener furnished as a gift all the provisions needed by the two Rifle Companies of sixty-five men when they set out for Lawrence.⁴¹ Bondi, who had returned from St. Louis that very day, promptly joined the Pottawatomie Rifles under the command of H. H. Williams on the same errand.⁴²

No sooner had the company started, however, than the pro-slavery

³⁷ *Ibid.* Also in 3 *Kan. Hist. Coll.*, p. 465. See also letter of John Brown, Jr., in *Publ. of the Kansas States Hist. Soc.* (1886), I., p. 273.

³⁸ See Noble L. Prentiss, *A History of Kansas*, (1899). Also Sanborn's *Life and Letters of John Brown*, p. 200.

³⁹ See sketch in 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, pp. 275, &c.

⁴⁰ J. F. Rhodes, *History of the United States*, ii., pp. 158-9.

⁴¹ Sanborn's *Life &c.*, p. 272. Connelley's *John Brown*, pp. 108-9.

⁴² Also sketch in 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, pp. 275, &c.

men served notice on Wiener's family, and that of Benjamin, to leave the territory or they would hang them and burn the store.⁴³ Nor did this apply to Wiener alone. Notices were prepared and delivered to free state settlers warning them to leave in three days and threatening them with death.⁴⁴ As a matter of fact the families of those who had gone to the defense of Lawrence, were actually insulted and driven off their property.⁴⁵

Out of revenge for the assistance Wiener had given, the ruffians attacked his place and burned his store with its valuable contents.⁴⁶ Several of the writers, however, claim that this was done several days later.⁴⁷ As for the Browns, a contemporary writer informs us they were hunted as we hunt wolves to-day.⁴⁸

On their way the defenders learned that Lawrence had been sacked, and it was also reported that no sooner had they left than the settlements of Brown and his neighbors were attacked by the ruffians, and their families driven from their homes.⁴⁹

Bondi gives us the following account: "At 9 o'clock of the evening, a messenger from Pottawatomie Creek arrived and reported that the pro-slavery men had gone from house to house of free state men, and threatened that shortly the Missourians would be there and make a clean sweep of them, and at many places, where the men were absent, grossly insulted their wives and daughters."⁵⁰

Hearing this, John Brown called for volunteers to return to the Pottawatomie. Seven responded, one of whom was Wiener.⁵¹ According to Townsley, one of the participants, the entire company were driven in a wagon with the exception of Wiener who rode his own gray pony.⁵²

None of the party actually knew John Brown's plan on that occa-

⁴³ *Ibid.* Also Connelley, pp. 108, 138. See also letter of John T. Grant quoted in *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, (2d Series), vol. xiv., p. 5.

⁴⁴ Connelley, p. 105, &c.

⁴⁵ Connelley, p. 142.

⁴⁶ Sanborn, p. 230, &c. *The Kansas Conflict*, by Charles Robinson, late Governor of Kansas, (Lawrence), 1898, p. 287.

⁴⁷ Connelley, p. 108.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-15.

⁵⁰ Connelley, p. 142. See also 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Trans.*, 279.

⁵¹ Connelley, pp. 109-16. See also p. 115. Sanborn's *Life*, &c., p. 263.

⁵² Connelley, p. 116. Sanborn, p. 263.

sion. All believed they were merely returning to protect their homes, but during the night of May 24, 1856, the plan developed, and became what is known in Kansas history as The Pottawatomie Massacre, in which the Doyles, Wilkinson and Shermans were killed. It was really a lynching party and has been severely condemned by several writers, though it has been defended by several of the foremost men of Kansas as a necessary measure. Among these might be mentioned Governor Robinson,⁵³ General Shelby,⁵⁴ Hon. James F. Legate,⁵⁵ Judge Hanway,⁵⁶ F. B. Sanborn,^{56a} and the recent work of Mr. William E. Connelley in *Twentieth Century Classics*.⁵⁷ The undisputed testimony is, however, that Wiener had no part in the killing, he and Frederick Brown having been assigned to guard duty by their commander.⁵⁸

The result of the massacre was important, for it admittedly had the effect of quieting the territory and intimidating the Border Ruffians.

It is of course impossible to defend this event except on the ground of self-defense. I might, however, mention that in an article in the *North American Review* (1884) Senator Ingalls quotes with approval the following from Judge Hanway: "I did not know of a settler in 1856 but what regarded it amongst the most fortunate events in the history of Kansas. It saved the lives of the Free State men on the Creek, and those who did the act were looked upon as deliverers."⁵⁹ On the other hand this event has been written about with most unsparing severity by men like Prof. Burgess and Mr. Rhodes.⁶⁰

We now come to the most important part of Brown's career in Kansas, known as the Battle of Black Jack, a "battle" in which both Wiener and Bondi participated.^a

Returning from Pottawatomie, Brown went to the cabin of his son

⁵³ *The Kansas Conflict* by Charles Robinson, late Governor of Kansas, (Lawrence), 1898, pp. 267, &c., quoted also in Connelley, at p. 140, and in Sanborn, p. 269.

⁵⁴ See Connelley, pp. 142-6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 145-6, ^{56a} Franklin B. Sanborn, *Life, &c.*, (Boston, 1885), who collects many authorities at p. 248, &c., and 280-1.

⁵⁷ Connelley, 120-1, 137, 140.

⁵⁸ See S. J. Shively's Address on *The Pottawatomie Massacre*, in 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, pp. 177-181. See also *The Kansas Conflict* by Charles Robinson, pp. 265-7.

⁵⁹ See Connelley, giving the opinions of many prominent men to the same effect, pp. 120-1, 137, 154-6. Also Sanborn, p. 281.

⁶⁰ John W. Burgess, *The Middle Period*. (N. Y., 1897), p. 441. Rhodes' History, ii., 164-5.

^a Sanborn, 297.

John and found it solitary and deserted, the family having been driven away. The following night he went to the cabin of his son Jason, which was in a similar condition.⁶¹ Here he was joined by Bondi, whose account of intermediate events is as follows:

"Late in the evening of May 25th, I arrived at my claim in company with an old neighbor, Austin.—The family of Benjamin (whom we had left when we departed for camp) had disappeared, and no cattle were to be seen. This latter was a serious matter for there was nothing left in the shape of provisions. When I told Austin that I was willing to stay with him until the last of the Border Ruffians had left the country, he encouraged me and assured me that he would find Benjamin's family and protect them at all events. This the old man faithfully did. In memory of his friendship and self-sacrifice, I have placed a simple slab on his soldier's grave near Helena on the Mississippi. The next evening, May 26th, I arrived, tired and hungry, at the camping ground of John Brown, a log cabin on the banks of Middle Creek. This is one of the houses which under the name of 'John Brown's Cabin' has since become famous. Here also I found my friend Wiener."⁶²

From the narrative of John Brown, Jr., it appears that Benjamin had been taken to Baptisteville, now called Paola, with some of Brown's followers.⁶³

Brown and his associates now resolved to go to the assistance of any free state family or community, and Connelley, his biographer, informs us that the whole party were but poorly armed, the leader with a sword and a heavy revolver, Wiener with a double barreled gun, and Bondi with an old-fashioned flintlock musket, while others in the party were similarly equipped.⁶⁴

The occasion for action soon presented itself. The settlers at Prairie City were threatened, and sent a messenger to search out Captain Brown, and request him to come to their protection.

The aggressor in this case was Captain Pate, a Virginian who was

⁶¹ Sanborn, *Life, &c.*, p. 271. Connelley, p. 157.

⁶² Sanborn, pp. 271-2. Connelley, p. 157.

⁶³ Sanborn, p. 276. It seems that prior to this, Benjamin had organized a military company also, for in the Secretary's Report of the Kansas Hist. Soc. (1881) there is mentioned among the MSS. collections of that Society a 'Muster Roll of Captain Jacob Benjamin's Pottawatomie Rifles. Pottawatomie Creek, 1855.' See I., *Kan. Hist. Coll.*, p. 96.

⁶⁴ Connelley, pp. 157-9. Sanborn, p. 293.

at the head of a company of ruffians known as Shannon's Sharp Shooters. They had been at the sacking of Lawrence, and after that are said to have burned the house and store of Wiener. Pate had then set out to capture Brown, and the robberies by these men of the free state settlers is said to have caused the latter to seek John Brown's protection.⁶⁵

On May 27th, Brown and his party reached a secluded spot on Ottawa Creek, which the messenger from Prairie City indicated as a safe place for camping, and here they remained till June 1st.⁶⁶

Of this camp we have a most interesting description from the gifted pen of James Redpath, then a Kansas correspondent of the *New York Tribune*. He was looking for an old preacher who lived near here and who was to carry his New York letter for mailing to Kansas City, when he accidentally stumbled upon John Brown's camp. His description is too long to give in full, but I venture to quote what impressed him most, and does credit to the little band.

"In this camp," says he, "no manner of profane language was permitted, no man of immoral character was allowed to stay except as a prisoner of war. It was at this time that the old man said to me, 'I would rather have the small-pox, yellow fever and cholera all together in my camp, than a man without principles.' 'It's a mistake, sir,' he continued, 'that our people make, when they think that bullies are the best fighters.—Give me men of good principles, God-fearing men, men who respect themselves,—and with a dozen of them I will oppose any hundred of such men as these Buford ruffians.' I remained in the camp about an hour. Never before had I met such a band of men. They are not earnest, but earnestness incarnate."⁶⁷

Bondi, who was present, has also given an account of the camp, and mentions Redpath's visit, stating that the latter encouraged them until "they felt as if they were the extreme outpost of the free North in Kansas."⁶⁸

At this time Brown suggested that if they had to leave Kansas on account of the cowardice or indifference of their friends, they might go

⁶⁵ Connelley, 159, 160-1. Also Sanborn, 293.

⁶⁶ Sanborn, pp. 293-4.

⁶⁷ Sanborn, *Life &c.*, pp. 294-6. Also article in 8 *Kan. Hist Soc. Coll.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*. See also Sanborn, p. 296.

to Louisiana and head an uprising of the slaves there, but Bondi advised against such a course.⁶⁹

On the night of May 31, 1856, Pate camped on the prairie near the ravines, which formed a small stream called Black Jack, from the abundance of a scrub of that name which grew about it. He then went to Palmyra, which town he attacked and plundered, committing several outrages. A wagon was loaded with spoil, and then the company proceeded to go to Prairie City for pillage. The free state forces were all told thirty men, nineteen under Captain Shore and nine under Brown; Wiener and Bondi being among the latter. An encounter known as the Battle of Black Jack ensued, which lasted three hours, and is vividly described by several Kansas historians.⁷⁰ Pate was finally compelled to surrender; the free state men captured a large quantity of arms and ammunition, took twenty-six prisoners, and recovered much property that had been stolen from the settlers, including some of the plunder taken from Lawrence, and four wagons loaded with provisions.

A detailed account of this engagement, written by Mr. Bondi, may be found in Vol. 8 of the Kansas Historical Collections.⁷¹

In his report of the battle, made to a committee at Lawrence, John Brown gives a list of those who took part in the engagement, mentioning the two Jews referred to.⁷²

Several years ago, Mr. Bondi wrote a letter concerning Black Jack, which is in the possession of the American Jewish Historical Society, and may not be without interest, showing incidentally the attachment of the followers to their leader. He writes as follows: "When we followed Captain Brown up the hill towards the Border Ruffians' Camp, I next to Brown and in advance of Wiener, we walked with bent backs, nearly crawled, that the tall dead grass of the year before might somewhat hide us from the Border Ruffian marksmen, yet the bullets kept on whistling. Wiener was 37 and weighed 250 lbs. I, 22 and lithe. Wiener puffed like a steamboat, hurrying behind me. I called out to him,

⁶⁹ See sketch in 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, p. 283. Also Sanborn, p. 296.

⁷⁰ Connelley, pp. 162-5. Sanborn, pp. 297-305. Article in *The Morning Oregonian*, (Portland), Sept. 3, 1903. (The Battle of Black Jack). Emerson in his *Diary*, (March, 1857), mentions the Battle of Black Jack with evident satisfaction. The present writer possesses autograph letters from Mr. Bondi, giving detail concerning the engagement.

⁷¹ See also Sanborn, pp. 293, 294, 297-308, and Connelley, 162-6.

⁷² Sanborn, pp. 290 and 302.

‘Nu, was meinen Sie jetzt.’ (‘Now, what do you think of this?’) His answer, ‘Was soll ich meinen,’ (‘What shall I think of it,’) ‘Sof odom muves’ (a Hebrew phrase meaning ‘the end of man is death,’ or in modern phraseology, ‘I guess we’re up against it’).

“In spite of the whistling of the bullets, I laughed when he said, ‘Machen wir den alten Mann sonst broges’ (Look out, we’ll make the old man angry). We started and came up with Captain Brown, and we finished the job as related in the enclosed report.”⁷³

In a letter written by Brown to his friend Edward B. Whitman in August, 1856, he gives “Names of sufferers and persons who have made sacrifices in endeavoring to maintain and advance the Free State Cause in Kansas within my personal knowledge.” He mentions nine groups, the first of which is:

“Two German refugees (thoroughly Free State) robbed at Pottawatomie, named Benjamin and Bondy (or Bundy) one has served under me as a volunteer; namely Bondy, Benjamin was a prisoner for some time. Suffered by men under Coffee & Pate.”⁷⁴

Shortly after the battle of Black Jack and in August, 1856, Brown organized a military company known as the Kansas Regulars. Those who enlisted subscribed to the following covenant:

“We, whose names are found on these and the next following pages, do hereby enlist ourselves to serve in the Free State Cause under John Brown as Commander, during the full period of time affixed to our names respectively, and we severally pledge our word and our sacred honor to said Commander and to each other that during the time for which we have enlisted we will faithfully and punctually perform our duty—as a regular volunteer force for the maintenance of the rights and liberties of the Free State citizens of Kansas.” Then follow the usual military rules which the volunteers agree to obey.⁷⁵

Thirty-five names are given with dates of enlistment, among them August 24, J. Benjamin, August 25, August Bondie.”⁷⁶

⁷³ See also account, substantially identical with above, in *The Morning Oregonian*, (Portland, Oregon), Sept. 3, 1903, which also contains the pictures of Solomon Brown and August Bondi. The writer possesses a similar letter from Mr. Bondi.

⁷⁴ Sanborn, p. 241.

⁷⁵ Sanborn, pp. 287-290. Connelley, p. 179.

⁷⁶ Sanborn, p. 288. See also Richard J. Hinton, *John Brown and His Men*, p. 40. “To the camp came August Bondi, European engineer and soldier.”

There is also extant a book in Brown's handwriting giving a list of twenty-seven names: "Volunteers in the fight of Black Jack or Palmyra, June 2, '56." Among these also are Theodore Wiener and August Bondy.⁷⁷

On August 30, 1856, occurred Brown's most famous engagement, known as the Battle of Osawatimie. Some 400 pro-slavery men attacked the town, and one of Brown's sons was killed. When he heard of the attack he hurried with about thirty men to its defense. Between forty and fifty of the assailants were wounded and thirty-one killed, but despite all, the defense was unavailing, for Osawatimie was burnt.⁷⁸ In 1877 a tablet was erected on the spot as a tribute to Brown and his men.⁷⁹ Both Bondi and Benjamin were in his company at the time, and took part in the engagement.⁸⁰

Shortly afterward Brown left Kansas, returning, however, in 1858 under the assumed name of Shubal Morgan. He organized a military company and waged war against slavery in the southeastern border of Kansas. The list of this company contains fifteen names, among them that of Theodore Wiener.⁸¹

Wiener's subsequent career was not remarkably eventful; he served in the army for a time during the Civil War and died but recently. His remains are interred in the Jewish cemetery at St. Louis.⁸²

Benjamin also served as a soldier during the Civil War, in the 11th Kansas for three years, and died in 1866.⁸³ Bondi continued an ardent supporter of the anti-slavery cause, and in 1857 stumped Anderson County for the Topeka Constitution which was promulgated by the Free State Party. He participated in the fights at Bayne's Ford and Little Osage, and when the Civil War broke out, was among the first to enlist, being first sergeant of Co. K, 5th Kansas Cavalry in 1861.⁸⁴ He partici-

⁷⁷ Sanborn, p. 290.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 314-23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Also sketch in 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Coll.* Also original letter from Mr. Bondi. See also *Recollections of John Brown in Springfield* (Massachusetts) *Republican*, and account in *Salina Journal*, Dec., 1883, and Jan., 1884.

⁸¹ Sanborn, p. 474. See also Richard J. Hinton, *John Brown and His Men*, (N. Y., 1894), p. 643.

⁸² Original letters from Mr. Bondi to the present writer.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Also sketch in 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, p. 275, &c.

pated in every engagement of his regiment, remaining in active service for over three years. A sketch of his career may be found in the Transactions of the Kansas Historical Society.⁸⁵ In August, 1865, he removed to Leavenworth, and in the following July to Saline County, which became his permanent home. He held various offices—Land Office Clerk, Postmaster, Member of the School Board, and for many years a director of the State Board of Charities and of the Kansas Historical Society. In 1860 he married Miss Henrietta Einstein at Leavenworth, and in his narrative describes himself as a consistent Jew.⁸⁶

Some years ago he presented to the Kansas Historical Society a flintlock musket given to him by John Brown in 1856, and which was saved from the ashes of Bondi's cabin, burnt while he was with the Union Army during the Civil War.⁸⁷

The career of Brown and his men, according to Rhodes and Burgess, accomplished practically nothing; according to Emerson and others it accomplished marvels. Even were we to subscribe to the former estimate, it is still an important element in American history. It may be likened to some intense pain in one of the limbs of the human frame, which though effecting no cure, yet draws constant attention to the fact that there is something seriously wrong, which the surgeon's knife may have to reach in order to save the entire body. Certain it is, that the activity of Brown and his men in Kansas attracted the attention of every part of the Union to the state of things existing there, never for a moment permitting the country to forget that slavery was the cause of it all, and that in order to save the Union, the surgery of the sword might be essential.

Whichever view we take, we cannot deny that John Brown was absolutely honest and that his handful of men were enthusiasts like himself. He seemed to instill into them his own spirit, and Bondi's account of the night before Black Jack, when they were all faint and hungry, may serve to illustrate the wonderful magnetism of the man:

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* Also 6 *Kan. State Hist. Soc. Coll.*, pp. 25, 431.

⁸⁶ *Ibid* and original letters from Mr. Bondi to the present writer. Also a Mss. Account of his career written by Mr. Bondi but unpublished. See also *Recollections of John Brown* in *Springfield (Mass.) Republican and Salina Journal*, Dec. 1883, and Jan., 1884. Also article in 6 *Kan. State Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 431, 425

⁸⁷ See 3 *Kan. Hist. Coll.*, p. 134. In Jan'y, 1886, in a letter to the Committee of the Quarter Centennial, John Brown, Jr., mentions Bondi as one of his father's company. *Ibid.*, 465.

"We were united," says Bondi, "as a band of brothers by the love and affection towards the man who, with tender words and wise counsel, in the depths of the wilderness of Ottawa Creek, prepared a handful of young men for the work of laying the foundation of a free Commonwealth." He constantly preached anti-slavery. "He expressed himself to us that we should never allow ourselves to be tempted by any consideration, to acknowledge laws and institutions to exist as of right, if our conscience and reason condemned them." Some of the remarks quoted are full of loftiest sentiments.⁸⁸

In conclusion it may not be inappropriate to give here Brown's own opinion of the men who stood by his side in Kansas. I will quote from that famous New Englander, Thoreau, who speaks of Brown in Kansas as follows: "He was like the best of those who stood at Concord Bridge once, on Lexington Common and on Bunker Hill, only he was firmer and higher-principled than any I have chanced to hear of there—Ethan Allen and Stark, with whom he may in some respects be compared, were rangers in a lower order and less important field. They could bravely face their country's foes, but he had the courage to face his country herself when she was in the wrong. He was never able to find more than a score or so of recruits whom he would accept, and only about a dozen in whom he had perfect faith. When he was here, he showed me a little manuscript book—his Orderly book, I think he called it—containing the names of his company in Kansas, and the rules by which they bound themselves, and he stated that several of them had already sealed the contract with their blood. When someone remarked that with the addition of a Chaplain, it would have been a perfect Cromwellian troop, he observed, that he would have been glad to add a Chaplain to the list, if he could have found one who could fill the office worthily. I believe that he had prayers in his camp morning and evening nevertheless."⁸⁹

Independently of what our views concerning John Brown may be, this paper may serve to emphasize that the Jew is no exception in the history of our country. The numerous papers in the volumes of the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society have shown that the Jew may be found as a pioneer in the history of almost all of the thirteen original colonies; that in proportion to his numbers he took his share in the Revolutionary struggle, and in every crisis through which our country has passed. Here again in the stormy days in Kansas, we find Jews

⁸⁸ Sketch in 8 *Kan. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, p. 283.

⁸⁹ Thoreau's *Diary*, 1857-8. See also Sanborn, *Life, &c.*, p. 503.

standing shoulder to shoulder with fellow-citizens of other denominations, fighting for the cause they believed to be right. On the slavery issue the Jews, like their Christian fellows, were by no means united; the Jew of the North gave his life for the flag, while many a Southern Jew was buried in his coat of gray.

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